## Ashliman **Contents** 1. The Making of the Earth. 2. <u>Languages Confused on a Mountain</u>. 3. Order of Life and Death.

**Blackfoot Creation** 

and Origin Myths

edited by

## 5. The First Marriage. 6. Old Man Leads a Migration. 7. Old Man and the Great Spirit.

- This collection of narratives was made among the several divisions of the Blackfoot Indians during the years 1903-1907. In rendering these narratives explanatory matter supplied by the Native-American
- narrator is indicated by parenthesis, that supplied by the translator or editor (Clark Wissler or D. C. Duvall) is indicated by brackets.

4. Why People Die Forever.

The Making of the Earth During the flood, Old Man was sitting on the highest mountain with all the beasts. The flood was caused by the above people, because the baby (a fungus) of the woman who married a star was heedlessly torn

in pieces by an Indian child.

also was drowned. At length he sent the Duck (?). It was drowned, but in its paw held some earth. Old Man saw it, put it in his hand, feigned putting it on the water three times, and at last dropped it. Then the above-people sent rain, and everything grew on the earth.

## Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, p. 19. • Return to the <u>table of contents</u>.

Languages Confused on a Mountain After the flood, Old Man mixed water with different colors. He whistled, and all the people came together. He gave one man a cup of one kind of water, saying, "You will be chief of these people here." To another man he gave differently colored water, and so on. The Blackfoot, Piegan, and Blood all

• Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York:

There was once a time when there were but two persons in the world, Old Man and Old Woman. One

"No, I will not agree to this," said Old Woman. "They must tan the hide in the way you say; but it must

"Well", said Old Man, "let the people have eyes and mouths in their faces; but they shall be straight up

"No," said Old Woman, "we will not have them that way. We will have the eyes and mouth in the faces,

"No," said Old Woman, "that will make childbearing too easy; the people will not care for their children.

be made very hard work, and take a long time, so that the good workers may be found out."

"Well," said Old Man, "we shall beget children. The genitals shall be at our navels."

time, when they were traveling about, Old Man met Old Woman, who said, "Now, let us come to an

Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, p. 19.

Old Man sent the Otter down to get some earth. For a long time he waited, then the Otter came up dead.

Old Man examined its feet, but found nothing on them. Next he sent Beaver down, but after a long time

he also came up drowned. Again nothing was found on his feet. He sent Muskrat to dive next. Muskrat

## Then he said to the people, "Talk," and they all talked differently; but those who drank black water spoke the same. This happened on the highest mountain in the Montana Reservation [Chief Mountain?].

• Return to the <u>table of contents</u>.

Order of Life and Death

received black water.

"Well," said Old Man, " I am to have the first say in everything." To this Old Woman agreed, provided she had the second say. Then Old Man began, "The women are to tan the hides. When they do this, they are to rub brains on them to make them soft; they are to scrape them well with scraping tools, etc. But all this they are to do

very quickly, for it will not be very hard work."

and down."

agreement of some kind; let us decide how the people shall live."

- as you say; but they shall all be set crosswise." "Well," said Old Man, "the people shall have ten fingers on each hand." "Oh, no!" said Old Woman. "That will be too many. They will be in the way. There shall be four fingers and one thumb on each hand."
- The genitals shall be at the pubes." So they went on until they had provided for everything in the lives of the people that were to be. Then Old Woman asked what they should do about life and death.
- Should the people always live, or should they die? They had some difficulty in agreeing on this; but finally Old Man said, "I will tell you what I will do. I will throw a buffalo chip into the water, and, if it floats, the people die for four days and live again. But, if it sinks, they will die forever."
- So he threw it in, and it floated. "No," said Old Woman, "we will not decide in that way. I will throw in this rock. If it floats, the people
- "Well," said Old Man, let it be that way."

• Return to the <u>table of contents</u>.

Why People Die Forever

in the world."

die, we die forever.

again."

One time Old Man said to Old Woman, "People will never die."

"No," said he, "we fixed it once."

- "Well," said Old Man, "we will decide this way. We will throw a buffalo chip into the water. If it sinks, we will die forever; if it floats, we shall live again." "Well," said Old Woman, "throw it in."
- Now the chief of the women came down once more to pick out a husband, and as she went around, Old picking out another for her husband.
- some animal sticking up through the ice. Now the boy wanted this horn, and began to cry. So his mother took an ax and cut it off. As she did so, the ice gave way, and only those on this side of the place where the horn was will ever get here. Now Old Man led these people down to where the Blood Reserve now is, and told them that this would be a fine country for them, and that they would be very rich.

He said, "I will get all the people here."

Blackfoot were just one tribe.)

- "Yes," said Old Man, "I am very strong."
- Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, pp. 22-23 • Return to the <u>table of contents</u>.
- Return to the <u>table of contents</u>. **Old Man Leads a Migration**
- Man kept stepping in front of her, so that she might see him. But she paid no attention to him, finally After a while all the men had been picked out except Old Man. Now he was very angry; but the chief of the women said to him, "After this you are to be a tree, and stand just where you are now." Then he became a tree, and he is mad yet, because he is always caving down the bank.
- Now Old Man saw many nicely dressed women waiting their turn, and when the chief of the women too him by the hand he pulled back and broke away. He did this because he thought her a very common woman. When he pulled away, the chief of the women went back to her lodge and instructed the other women not to choose Old Man. While the other women were picking out their husbands, the chief of the women put on her best costume
- Man because of his fine appearance.
- Now the men began to get ready, and Old Man dressed himself up in his finest clothes. He was always fine looking. Then they started out, and when they came to the women's camp they all stood up in a row. Now the chief of the women came out to make the first choice. She had on very dirty clothes, and none of the men knew who she was. She went along the line, looked them over, and finally picked out Old
- of the women. She said she had been sent by the chief of the women to invite all the men, because the women were going to pick out husbands.
- The First Marriage Now in those days, the men and the women did not live together. The men lived in one camp and the women in the other. The men lived in lodges made of skin with the hair on; the women, in good lodges. [The idea is, that the women dress the skins, hence the men could not live in dressedskin lodges.] One
- day Old Man came to the camp of the men, and, when he was there, a woman came over from the camp

- Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, p. 21.

- Return to the <u>table of contents</u>.

- Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York:
- Now, Old Woman had great power, and she caused the chip to turn into a stone, so it sank. So when we

When she came out, she looked very fine, and as soon as Old Man saw her, he thought, "Oh! There is the

chief of the women. I wish to be her husband." He did not know that it was the same woman.

• Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York:

Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, pp. 21-22

The first Indians were on the other side of the ocean, and Old Man decided to lead them to a better place

So he brought them over the ice to the far north. When they were crossing the ice, the Sarcee were in the

middle and there was a boy riding on a dog travois. As they were going along, this boy saw a horn of

All the people living there are and lived like wild animals; but Old Man went among them and taught

them all the arts of civilization. (When crossing the ice, only about thirty lodges succeeded in getting

across, and among these were the representatives of all the tribes now in this country. At that time the

When he was through teaching them, he did not die, but went among the Sioux, where he remained for a

time, but finally disappeared. He took his wife with him. He had no children.

- "Well," said, Old Man, "we do not want to die forever. We shall die for four days and then come to life "Oh, no!" said Old Woman, "it will be better to die forever, so that we shall be sorry for each other."
- people died forever. So she said to Old Man, "Let us have our say over again." • Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, pp. 19-21
- never feel sorry for each other, and there would be no sympathy in the world."
- will die for four days. If it sinks, the people will die forever."
- Then Old Woman threw the rock out into the water, and it sank to the bottom.
- "There," said she, "it is better for the people to die forever; for, if they did not die forever, they would After a time Old Woman had a daughter, who died. She was very sorry now that it had been fixed so that
- Oh! "said Old Woman, "that will never do; because, if people live always, there will be too many people

- **Old Man and the Great Spirit**
- There was once a Great Spirit who was good. He made a man and a woman. Then Old Man came along. No one made Old Man. He always existed. The Great Spirit said to him, "Old Man, have you any power?"
- "Well," said the Great Spirit, "suppose you make some mountains." So Old Man set to work and made the Sweet-Grass Hills. To do this he took a piece of Chief Mountain. He brought Chief Mountain up to its present location, shaped it up, and named it. The other mountains were called blood colts.
- "Well," said the Great Spirit, "you are strong." "Now," said Old Man, "there are four of us: the man and woman, you and I." The Great Spirit said, "All right."
- The Great Spirit said, "I will make a big cross for you to carry." Old Man said "No, you make another man so that he can carry it."
- The Great Spirit made another man. Old Man carried the cross a while, but soon got tired and wanted to go. The Great Spirit told him that he could go, but he should go out among the people and the animals, and teach them how to live, etc.
- Now the other man got tired of carrying, the cross. He was a white man. The Great Spirit sent him off as a traveler. So he wandered on alone. The man and woman who had been created wandered off down towards Mexico, where they tried to build a mountain in order to get to the sky to be with their children. But the people got mixed up until
- they came to have many different languages.
- Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, <u>Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians</u> (New York: • Return to the <u>table of contents</u>.
- Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, pp. 23-24 Return to D. L. Ashliman's **folktexts**, a library of folktales, folklore, fairy tales, and mythology. Revised September 10, 2019.